

1908

THE IRISH PRIEST

BY

“TORY HILL”



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Dedicated by permission to his Eminence
CARDINAL GIBBONS

Extract from his letter to the author: “In return I am pleased to inform you that the desired permission is heartily granted. I recommend it especially to priests of Irish Nationality.”

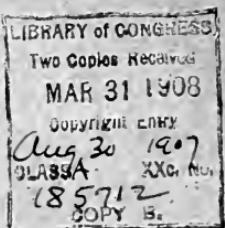
Faithfully yours in Christ,

(Signed) J. CARD. GIBBONS.

PORTLAND, CONN.:

MIDDLESEX COUNTY PRINTERY.

1908.



DEDICATION

Ye sons of men who labor on the earth
Consigned to lowly state from hour of birth
And earn a livlihood from honest toil
By God's decree your lot is that of moil
Have faith in Him, be just, you'll gain reward
He rules with justice, He's the Supreme Lord
Whate'er befalls unto the bitter end
His church will ever be the poor man's friend
Its ruler with his councillors of state
Will e'er condemn injustice of the great
Amongst whom scarce ever has been one
Who confidence of toilers has so won
Or with more honor has the purple bore
Than Gibbons who now rules at Baltimore
With due respect, so now I gladly state
This little poem to him I now dictate.

TORY HILL

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THE IRISH PRIEST.

Some years ago I went to Erin's Isle
And rested there for just a little while
My purpose was conditions to observe
And in my memory careful them preserve
The scenery, the people and the laws
The forces that sustain the national cause
'Mid these is one and not indeed the least
That holy man, the humble Irish priest
Of him I think and then my heart will glow
His equal on this earth I do not know
Then hear what now of him I am to say
A tribute well deserved I mean to pay
So many virtues in his soul contend
His heart so great he is of all the friend
The taint of sin to his pure mind unknown
He seems a saint on earth as now I own
The people ever had one friend at least
To them devoted heart and soul the priest
There blood was his—he knew their hopes and fears
And strove to heal their wounds to dry their tears.
So saintly just he only sought the right
To win them justice was his sole delight
No better truer friend on earth e'er trod
Than this kind priest "the perfect man of God"
His look, his mien, his brow is ever mild
He's meek and tender as the little child
The words of truth in every place he speaks
To each who from his lips true wisdom seeks
Skilled in the problems made so long before
He knew the dogmas of profoundest lore
He taught so well the aged and the youth
The saving faith—yea—God's eternal truth
Self-sacrificing always for the poor
He sought them in their hovels on the moor
In their esteem no one can him replace

With his sweet smile and his angelic face.
Be sure I do not praise him over much
A happy feeling soothes one at his touch
His shadow does the sick their health procure
As Peter—says the Gospel—thus did cure
The light of heaven does around him shine
A thousand noble traits in him combine
That he is holy, this I need not say,
His every word and act will it display.
Yea! he is gifted with such sacred power
That he may heaven's grace upon men shower
And yet no matter what he may possess
'Tis not himself but others he will bless
Redemption's fruit dispense he ever would
Like Christ he "goes around but doing good."
He often rose so early in the morn
To seek unseen the sad and the forlorn
Careful had been that none should ever see
The many gifts he gave in charity
When dire distress lay brooding o'er the land
The souper sneaking thief with smile so bland
And words of promise false, but still so sweet
Would make him barter faith for bread and meat
When pangs of hunger gnawed their hearts away
These serpents would the peasants then betray
Then did these agents from the depths of hell
Try to seduce poor souls by means so fell
A glorious birthright—fainting Esau sold
The famine—dying their faith should sell for gold
Or no relief could find, but did they bow
To the reformed creed the grass of cow
And plot of land was given seldom taken
They ne'er betray their faith for fitch of bacon
Against these agents of the prince of lies
He strove and showed them in their horrid guise
'Gainst methods low and schemes so base and vile
Which would the members of his flock defile
He watched and prayed, he labored and he strove

To break the snares these tempters round them wove
Some wretch a "turncoat" became through sloth
Apostatised from his baptismal oath
And tramped under foot his ancient faith
This crime among that people was so great
'Twas strange that not one Sunday e'er could pass
But found him kneeling prostrate hearing mass
Till minister of the heretic creed
Upbraided him—aye—with a fiendish greed
Pray tell me, Pat, if this can now be true
A convert stout I thought I made of you
What means it then this news of you I hear
At Romish church at Sabbath you appear?
Behold the culprit how he'll scratch his head
For now his soul is filled with awful dread
"I go to mass for good of my poor soul
For grass of cow to meeting then I stroll."
This was Patrick's the pervert's keen reply
Ah! what sly humor then danced in his eye
While hunger lasts he is a Protestant
When stomach's full how quickly he'll recant
This well recalls of Judas what is told
The wretched miser sold his God for gold
Such schemes were planned by Luther's wretched brood
To win the starving by a dole of food
And make them barter heaven's treasure great
That they might pangs of hunger satiate
Betray the faith for which their sires had died
Beneath the sword and tyrants thus defied
But one who fell a victim to their schemes
Can't rest in death in Irish soil it seems
Perhaps his soul in hour of death did save
The cows at night tore up his tainted grave
His labor always fired the demon's wrath
Who sought to strew sin's snares in his flock's path
He would remove these ills and bring them peace
And when success was won but then did cease
He probes the depths with glance so keen but kind

Thus all that's wrong with soul he'll surely find
Which when he freed from Satan's deadly grasp
With bonds of heaven's love he did them clasp
But while in danger wistful was his look
To win with warning voice all pains he took
His eyes like pools of unforgotten sorrow
His saintly glance will gladness from all borrow
For one he's lived, for Him he would have died
The object of his love—the Crucified
This was the prize for which he ever sought
For this alone both day and night he wrought
How notably the soul religion fires
How unsurpassed the feelings it inspires
Ah! what the throbings such a heart must feel
This worthy priest with his good-shepherd zeal
From human gaze withdrawn he longs to be
But angels will record his charity
How oft a price was placed upon his head
Most gladly, for their souls his blood he'd shed
The little stainless lambkins of the fold
All these did he strive to garner for the Lord
Successful labor brought its own reward
A vintage glorious bloomed for heaven when
They virtuous grew as women pure and men
He is no cynic with a scornful pride
And hence the lowly poor will not deride
When stain of sin was marked upon the soul
To fault efface and make them win the goal
He ever strove, nor ceased till the last breath
Found each one ready then to meet with death
His love for them what honor to himself
Was ne'er inspired by wish for any pelf
Sublime the course of life which he pursues
Unheeding what may be the worldly views
Those fiends of hell—earth's tyrants—he'd defy
And for the faith he taught would proudly die
Such graces come to him as dew at even
‘For he that hath to him it shall be given’

And nought on earth his powers can now confine
He is to men the messenger divine
So near is God to him Ah! who can tell
For of this world his absence makes a hell
No boast from out his lips is ever heard
For innocence to knowledge he preferred
To win the souls his precious blood had bought
Against the powers of hell he ever fought
Though many hours he poured upon his books
Yet faithful guardian over all he looks
Each day good deeds he does till setting sun
As darkness falls all daily duties done
At altar prone he often sees a light
As Moses once upon great Horeb's height
So, too, as if on Nebo he did rest
God opes to him a vision of the blest
He influences the race as moral yeast
This saint on earth—the holy Irish priest.
Upon his sacred powers they so rely
The bread of angels he'll to them supply
Much does he plan their sorrows to forestall
Both day and night so prompt at every call
Unto the bedside did he hasten quick
When he was warned anyone lay sick
With genial smile he entered at the door
True consolation on their hearts did pour
The peace of heaven glows in his sweet smile
His kindly words their sorrows soon beguile
His presence always cheers the peasants cot
Who scarce can hope, so bitter is their lot
Their love, respect and confidence does win
On virtue's path he leads them, free from sin.
If in death's throes he found that they were lying
With heaven's grace he fortified the dying
Unto the soul he gave supernal peace
And watched and prayed until this life did cease
The soul he then unto it's God resigned
And blessed the corpse e'er to the earth consigned.

His soul well stored from out patristic page
His mind thus held the learning of each age
In every move 'gainst unjust laws or kings
Strong for the right, his clarion voice it rings
To gain success while striving for the rights
Their leader true—the people he unites.

The little lambs who wandered through the fold
In his embrace he gently did enfold
The guilty sheep that from the flock had strayed
He sought, restored in innocence arrayed
He did in Master's footsteps ever tread
And by His sacred teachings was he led
The unjust rich he chode in terms strong
That they should cease—no more to do the wrong
And from rebukings stern he ne'er abstains
Until they had restored ill-gotten gains
For them as for the poor is but one code
To heaven reach, must walk the narrow road
He counsilled peace while urging poor man's rights
And he alone restrained from bloody fights
So tender, patient, kind, in nought severe
Or only when the guilty would not hear
His warning voice, and leave the sinful course
This always he denounced in hard discourse
But the poor maid who robbed of all had been
That women prize and makes of each a queen
Above the world—from her he'd wipe the stain
And make her like the lily once again
He knew the crafty demons never sleep
But seek e'er to decoy unwary sheep
To lead to virtue strive he ever would
His flock, and keep them always pure and good
Such was the mission that he sought to fill
To act as the "good shepherd" was his will
And he forever aimed at highest goals
In all his work he only sought for souls
Kind were the methods that he always planned
Thus seemed to guide and lead, not to command

In council wise unyielding as the rock
If evil threatened ruin to his flock
That he was saintly all the people knew
Goodness and virtue ever did pursue
When bowed by trials their hearts he would upraise
Their wants his care, unheeding worldly praise
With kindest glance their hardships he surveys
Oft on his knees to God for them he prays
Where'er he moves such peace and joy then reign
His touch benign relieves their hearts from pain
Of one so good, so pure, none ever wrote
No verses in his favor can we quote
Unknown to men his godly life pursues
The calls of duty never will refuse
Perhaps he's summoned to the fevered bed
With joy he goes uninfluenced by dread
To sin expel, the heart inspire with hope
And with the evil one in fight to cope
To conquer hell—this is his happy boast
With power divine he bears the Sacred Host
When devils tempt poor men in sin to fall
And with their snares unhappy souls enthrall
He gives them strength and courage for the fight
And thus they triumph for the God of right
So e'en the worst to save he ne'er disponds
His absolution breaking all their bonds
With love his heart is full in richest store
And heaven's favor brings to every door
His soul was sad whenever he did see
The poor amid his flock in misery
Much good he did this no one can gainsay
On virtue's path he treads both night and day
His deeds, his prayers such blessings on all drew
That fall on souls just like kind heaven's dew
The enemy he changed into a friend
And brought all discords to a happy end
The thief he made restore ill-gotten goods
His watchful eye kept outlaws in the woods

His secret deeds of goodness none can tell
And God alone the souls he saved from hell
Blest charity was given at his door
Who was in want had no need to implore
The beggar old, perhaps from hunger faint,
To him alone did make his sad complaint
The more he gave more plenteous store had still
Perhaps some spirit from on high did fill
The little box that he might always give
Unto the poor as long as he did live
The crowd of vagrants passing on the road
All found relief within his sweet abode
Well known was he to all such outcast there
Devout and humble holy man of prayer
Perhaps it was that sometimes he did chide
When by his teachings they did not abide
What pity for the bad and sinful few
Whom conscience to his kindly presence drew
"Depart in peace" 'twas thus his Master said
While they invoked God's blessings on his head
So pure he'd always been in heart and mind
Hence none more fit than he to lead mankind
Who if his teachings they did not disown
Would find themselves at death near heaven's throne
No need to speak of ages that are past
When persecution raged in fiercest blast
He often in the pale light of the moon
Came to their homes, beloved Soggarth Aroon
To cleanse their souls, their aching hearts to cheer
The greater danger made him still more dear
Where crime was done his power worked as the leaven
To purify and fit their souls for heaven
To him the little ones were always dear
And clustered round him pressing to get near
"Forbid them not" how sweet it was to see
Those childish lambs thus clinging to his knee
And as a mother with a fond caress
Unto his saintly bosom them he'd press

Their fondest love to him was freely given
 While this to win all else in vain had striven
 With those in years more serious was his mood
 Reserved in mien revered as Holy Rood
 His dignity and holiness restrain
 From anything unworthy all refrain
 The vilest tongue his virtues would disarm
 Unstained his life no one could do him harm
 His duty was the morals to inspect
 Of old and young, the erring to correct,
 The good uphold, the fallen ones to raise
 Of him their voice did oft resound in praise
 When on the bed of sickness they had lain
 His prayer and blessing oft relieved their pain
 Much consolation then he would impart
 Suffering ever touched his tender heart
 Endeared to them was he by many ties
 His loss they mourn, with bitter signs and tears
 And as he stood beside the bed of death
 Such hope he gave to each ere the last breath
 'Twas thus he spoke of Jesus Saviour kind
 The sinner from that heart would mercy find
 To all their wishes cheerily did respond
 And raise their thoughts to worlds that lay beyond
 That Blessed Name dread satan would defy
 Then strong in hope the patient longed to die
 The good he did scarce angel's pen can trace
 Freed souls from sin by means of heavenly Grace
 Relieved their wants from out his scanty store
 And for his aid they ne'er in vain implore
 Upon the sinful course he called a halt
 While gently he forgives the greatest fault
 With sympathy the kind man's breast is riven
 Who asks for pardon quickly is forgiven
 To leave the ways of sin who had the mind
 The best of friends in him did ever find
 Forgiveness when from him they once had craven
 He leads them then upon the path to heaven

The poor and needy his beneficence knew
And in their wants to him they quickly flew
Right well they felt no need his bounty crave
Ere they could ask, in charity he gave
Amid the tempters wiles he safely trod
Helped by their prayers—this holy man of God
And on his guidance ever they'd depend
But ah! he always is the poor man's friend
For when such wretched souls with sorrow burn
With confidence to him their hearts will turn
And as the child to mother in affright
Then clings unto her bosom still more tight
So too the poor in their most bitter hour
Will only wish to feel his sacred power
Full well they know when this good man is near
His words of wisdom will their sadness cheer
The stricken heart to him is ever drawn
He lights the gloom as soft as early dawn
He pours the oil of gladness on the soul
When crushed with grief, and soon will make it whole
As full of sweetness as the roses pod
He sheds a peace that surely comes from God
And hence the poor to him have e'er been true
And so his death they bitterly would rue
Against the tyrant steadfast has he stood
And hence for him they'd gladly shed their blood
Far from their souls he'd every pang remove
With patience would he mildly them reprove
He ever shares their sorrows and their joys
Their drooping spirits with kind hand he buoys
Our future fate no one on earth can tell
He speaks the truth, it must be heaven or hell
Despite the fruit of Calvary's cross still some
Will feel the vengeance of the wrath to come
He e'er has hopes that God at last will bless
His labors to relieve their sad distress
The wicked who provoked the wrath divine
With tender pity leads to mercy's shrine

“Advise, entreat, rebuke,” with patience still
For such he knows to be the Saviour’s will
Yea, for the sinful he would give his life
That not one soul might perish in the strife
Alas! alas! that doom since Adam fell
Has been for some a just eternal hell
He tells them that sweet mercy will be found
When heartfelt cries to heaven’s gates resound
And if he knew God’s angry threat was sent
Like Moses prayed until He did relent
Prepared is he good cause to advocate
And plead for justice with the men of state
With wise forethought he often did propose
To stem the torrent of the people’s woes
To poor dispensed with liberal hand the food
His was the joy of simply “doing good”
Like the widow of Serepta nought did fail
To him who oft the hungry did regale
For as he gave supplies from out the “till”
Some generous heart—yes—it did always fill
Afflicted’s cause and right of poor maintains
And when he can true justice he obtains
To right all things is the divine behest
Who’ll place on high the lowly and distressed
The great of earth upon the poor may frown
The Lord he raiseth them who are bowed down
The poor if they are righteous loveth He
On glorious thrones above their place shall be
While here the guilty may have great renown
The wicked ways He “turneth upside down”
He binds the wounds of every bleeding heart
And bids all sorrow from the good depart
One only seer, Elias, then did stand
Against the hosts of Bael in all the land
Such was the Irish priest in famine times
Against Hell’s minions who’d lead souls to crimes
How oft’ he stood beside the bed of death
To purify the soul ere the last breath

His power divine holds all things in control
That might bar Heaven to the struggling soul
The demons snare that fills all with affright
He quickly breaks and gives them true delight
And should cruel Satan different guilt combine
He'll all efface by means of grave divine
Should numerous sins bring darkness as of night
His pardon floods the soul with Heaven's light
No longer without guide has it to grope
For in the sky now shines the star of hope
He points aloft for promise has been given
That souls repentant, surely go to Heaven
With countenance serene before them stood
To speak to them of God—the only good
And raise their thoughts to Heaven o'er the skies
Which is for human beings the glorious prize
The truths he taught enlighten every heart
And joy and peace and grace to them impart
His speech so plain some swayed that throng among
With power and logic of his silvery tongue
To good pursue he thus the laggard spurred
With force and magic of his earnest word
For he was truly candid and sincere
They loved him so—his every word revere
For God and truth he at their head engaged
Fierce was the war for moral good he waged
Against those who trampled on God's laws
He strove and won them to his holy cause
And all his teachings gladly they accept
To him so true, the laws of God they kept
'Gainst threat of tyrants, promise proud they'd give
To die or keep the faith while they did live
Or shed the blood of an heroic heart
And often nobly played the martyrs' part
'Gain and again the might of Hell assails
These heroes die, their faith it never fails
The greatest proof of love that man can give
His life they sacrificed that faith might live

Of church the blood of martyrs is the seed
For God and faith the Irish proudly bleed
But they have triumphed o'er the tyrants' might
And fertilized in blood their faith is bright
For with that valiant hero at their head
They met all tortures brave and without dread
Their teacher ever was the first to die
With his example they did death defy
'Till Erin's plains were purpled red and gory
By Saints who winged their flight to God in Glory
Where now they reign and from their thrones look down
On those they love and pray they'll win the crown
In their Masters' foot-steps have they stood
To give their lives for what they knew was good
Their sacrifice has brought the true reward
To reign triumphant with the Supreme Lord.
Of angry threats the old law was the fount
His gospel is "the sermon on the mount"
A vengeance just on men for crime was poured
The law of love and mercy Christ restored
And in his steps this holy priest does tread
While people invoke blessings on his head
Like Israelites, rebel if they should dare
Once more for them he pardon wins by prayer
To him are given visions as of Thabor
A recompense so sweet for all his labor
Too wise—he ne'er gave credence to a fable
Too holy—shunned the curses of Mount Ebal
The people say when seeing this shepherd's rod
"Yea, now we know you are the man of God"
As if omnipotent his touch would heal
His heart was e'er responsive to appeal
Of agency divine he was the tool
To cure diseases as Bethsaida's pool
Where'er he moved a healing virtue shed
At his command the baffled demons fled
The Savior bid the blind to Siloe go
This priest will nought impose but cure bestow

So he did never vengeance tipify
But love and mercy from the Lord on high
His countenance o'ercast with grace divine
Is seen with heaven's kindly light to shine
His benediction often he imparts
Like balm of Gilead upon their hearts
If sin like fiery serpents did them sting
Supernal cure unto their souls he'd bring
When wounded by the demon's poisoned dart
At his command cursed satan did depart
Bowed down with years and weary from the strife
Comes to an end his peaceful happy life
The cares of earth aside he now will toss
With confidence he turns unto the cross
Beneath whose shadow e'er he did abide
Repentant gaze cast on the wounded side
The things of earth he always held as dross
He has not much, his death's the peoples loss
Great was his worth, and this they now deplore
Laid in the grave, they'll see his face no more
Much loved was he and ne'er inspiring fear
And when he's gone, his memory still is dear
So when in death at last he closed his eyes
Their hearts were pierced and piteous were their cries
But while they felt that he had won the goal
Their fervent prayers were offered for his soul
Beside the altar there his bones now rest
In glory—yea—he reigneth with the blest
Perhaps the muse benign, some influence shed
With magic wings she hovered o'er my head
And took my spirit through Parnassus grove
This theme beneath her inspiration wove
To think on poor man's wrongs my heart it gnaws
These would I right—not seek man's loud applause
And let us hope as God above doth reign
That justice to that land will come again
For this they strive—so pray that Being on high
Whom earth or hell too long cannot defy.



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